

VICTUALLING THE METROPOLIS.

ACCOUNT OF FULTON MARKET.

Where do all the Fish Come From?

This is the second great depot from which the metropolis is supplied with provisions, and in point of importance it is next to Washington market. Its business, however, though chiefly wholesale, is also of a different character. Washington market deals more extensively in country produce, while the principal trade of Fulton market is in fish, and all varieties of meat. The latter does not, in fact, present the same inducements to farmers to send their produce to it; the space is limited, and the accommodations very poor. About three or four years ago the supply of vegetables was, we are informed, more abundant; but within the last year or two, the country wagons from Long Island have left for Washington market, where they have found a more extensive custom and better sale. Fulton market, on account of its situation, never can have a large trade in vegetables, and will always remain inferior, in its general business, to Washington market. There is no room for expansion, and its limits must, therefore, remain always the same, unless some future Common Council should order the dock in front to be filled in. It is not probable, however, that this will ever be done, no matter how requisite it may appear, as the East river is too narrow at this point to admit of any contraction. Still, there is a very extensive area under the market, and sufficient accommodation for about two hundred stands and stalls. The market building itself is bounded by Front, Beekman, Fulton and South streets, and forms a square, each side of which is about two hundred feet in length. Between South street and the river, there are about fifteen stands, or, more properly speaking, sheds, for the sale of fish and fruit mainly. Under these the most extensive wholesale business in fish is transacted, and the dealers supply not only the various markets in New York, but in Williamsburg and Brooklyn.

The value of the whole property is estimated at \$210,000, which is \$170,000 less than Washington market. There is, however, a great disparity in the proportion of their rents to the amount of the property, for while the latter yields a revenue of over \$35,000 to the city treasury every year, the former pays about \$18,000. This material difference, however, is accounted for by the fact that there are more than twice the number of stands in Washington market; and also that a considerable part of the revenue derived from it is received for the rent of stands and sheds erected on the ground between West street and the river, which we believe is not included in the Comptroller's estimate of the market property.

The amount received from Fulton market for rent, has very recently increased within the last few years. Of the \$18,520.75 received in 1851, \$10,227.52 was paid for the rent of cellars, of which this market has more than any other in the city. The rent for butchers' stands, during the same year, amounted to \$33,442; the remainder being paid for vegetable, fish, poultry, and other stands. The highest rent paid for the best stand in the market does not exceed three dollars a week, while the poorest stand rents for three shillings. Several stands are occupied by the retail dealers in fancy wares, apple women, and coffee and pie men. The coffee stands, as a general thing, are quite an ornament to the market, and are regarded as a great convenience to the dealers and others doing business there, who are unable to leave the market to obtain their meals elsewhere. They are, therefore, pretty well patronized.

Fulton market was established about thirty years ago, on its present site. Soon after its erection the whole number of stalls, amounting to eighty-six, were put up at auction, and disposed of for \$19,015, which is an average of \$216 for each stand. The lowest price for which a stand can be purchased now is \$150, and some of the dealers would not dispose of their title for five or six thousand dollars. The aggregate value of all the stands may be estimated at \$100,000, which is rather under than over their real worth to the dealers. The price paid for the stands thirty years since, is about equal to the rent receipts at present. But it appears that the business of the market was so limited at that period that there were more stands than could be profitably occupied, and many of the victuallers were unable to pay their rents. This led to a reduction of the number; twenty-seven of the butchers' stalls in the southeast wing being allotted to fishermen, and the residue were let at a diminished price.

The market building, which is at present not in very good repair, is one story high, with a basement—the roof being supported on a large number of stone pillars. The butchers' stalls occupy three sides of the building, the centre being occupied by commission dealers in fowls, and all kinds of meat, besides a large number who sell vegetables, butter, cheese, &c. All the oyster stands are situated on the side of the market nearest to Fulton street, and they occupy a considerable space. Immediately in front of each is a separate stand, in which several persons are constantly employed in opening oysters. The principal stands display a great deal of taste in their construction, and are the most attractive in the whole market. They are all made of wood, and intended as an imitation of the Gothic style, and are certainly superior to those in Washington market, and we may add, to any other market in the city. Each has a kind of restaurant attached, in which oysters dressed to suit all tastes are served up during all hours of the day. Considerable quantities of oysters are disposed of in this manner, for they are an article of food that market dealers are very partial to.

We have said that the market is in bad repair; but still it is superior to many others in the city. There are three brick buildings attached to it, each of which is occupied as a boarding-house, while the cellars or basements are occupied as retail provision and liquor stores, restaurants, &c. The business done in these is very large, and the rent paid for them forms more than one-half the revenue from the whole market. Independent of the rent received from those who hold stands, stalls, and sheds, a small amount is collected by the clerk of the market, Mr. Isaacs, from pedlars of various kinds, each of whom is required by the ordinance to pay one shilling per week for the privilege of disposing of his wares inside the limits of the market. He also collects a market fee of six cents per day for every stand occupied by a countryman selling the produce of his own farm; and fifty cents from each person employed as an agent by such countryman.

The quarters assigned to the dealers in country produce, are situated in the lower part of the market, near South street. Every morning during the fruit and vegetable season, it is so crowded as to render it almost impossible to pass, while the thoroughfare is absolutely blocked up with wagons loaded with produce. By eight or nine o'clock the market is generally clear, and by one or two the business of the day is at an end.

After this general outline of the principal features of interest in the market, we present our readers with the following details of its business, commencing with the meat trade, as the most important:—

THE MEAT TRADE. There are sixty-five butchers' stalls in Fulton market, exclusive of those belonging to the commission dealers. Some of these butchers kill as many as fifty or sixty head of cattle in one week, but the average number sold by each is about fifteen. The highest daily receipts of any one amount to about five hundred dollars, and the lowest to seventy or eighty; but the average sales of each do not exceed one hundred and fifty. The proportion of beef to all other kinds of meat retailed in the market, is as about three to one. The aggregate yearly sales of these butchers are estimated at about three millions of dollars. Their business is chiefly with hotels and the steamboats and shipping along the East river. They also have customers on the North river, among whom may be mentioned Vanderbilt, whose line of

steamers is supplied by them. The number of heads of cattle slaughtered in one year for the butchers in Fulton market, is computed at sixteen thousand, independent of the "small meat," which is the general title for mutton, veal, lamb, and pork. The business of the regular butchers is said to be more extensive than that of the same class in Washington market. A butcher informed us that he expended, during one year, \$150,000 for the purchase of cattle, and that he paid, besides, about sixty dollars a day, the whole year round, for meat which he was obliged to buy from other dealers. A considerable portion of this meat is, however, salted and pickled, in barrels, and some of it is sent direct from the slaughterhouse to their customers. As a general thing, the butchers doing business in the market are opposed to the granting of licenses to isolated stalls throughout the city. Some of them believe that the establishment of a few more markets would be more desirable, and better suited to the wants of the people. A great deal of diseased and unhealthy meat is said to be sold at these stalls, which could not be exposed for sale in the open market without detection and instant exposure. However this may be, we are not prepared to decide; but there is one thing certain—that every honest butcher who is cognizant of such practices, should, out of respect for the credit of his business, and in justice to the public, inform the proper authorities of them. As a sample, we have had a half a butcher who was expelled from Fulton market, by those engaged in the same business, for exposing diseased meat for sale; and although he has made several applications to be permitted to return, he has never been allowed to rent a stall in the market, which, considering the number of stalls, is in every case of the kind, is calculated to secure the public confidence in any market in which it is adopted.

In addition to the regular butchers, there are about fifty commission dealers in the centre of the market, who also sell meat of various kinds. Their sales are very limited, however, and do not exceed two hundred thousand dollars in the year. They are not, however, it should be understood, restricted to the sale of meat, but do an extensive business in fowls. Their meat is sold at a commission of five per cent, and they are not allowed by the market rules to sell it by retail.

THE FISH TRADE.

Fulton market is, *par excellence*, the greatest fish depot in New York, and for this it is peculiarly adapted by its location. It is estimated that the number of fishing vessels constantly employed by the dealers exceeds one hundred and fifty, varying in capacity from twenty to one hundred and twenty tons. The average cost of each of these "fishing snags," as they are termed, is about four thousand dollars, including fishing tackle, &c., and the number of men employed upon them is about a thousand. The New York fishermen are a remarkably hardy and healthy class, and are capable of enduring an almost incredible amount of fatigue and labor. Their occupation, at particular seasons, is very laborious; they are exposed to all kinds of weather, and to this principally is owing their hardiness and strength. They are also very frugal and provident, and the majority of them are part owners of the boats on which they are employed. Their pursuit is much more lucrative than might be supposed, and in a few years some have been known to accumulate, if not large fortunes, at least sufficient to render them comfortable for life. As a general thing, the fishermen are not employed on regular wages, like sailors, but work on shares, receiving at the end of each trip an equal apportionment of the whole proceeds. As this is a subject of peculiar interest, we may be pardoned for making a digression here for the purpose of entering into a brief explanation of the manner in which this business is conducted. The fishing snags are owned generally by companies of three or four, and sometimes more, who are entitled to about two-fifths the amount of all the fish caught on each trip, the remaining three-fifths being distributed among the captain, mate, and the rest of the hands. The only one on board who receives a regular salary is the cook, whose particular duties prevent him from engaging in the business of catching fish. As we have already said, the fishermen are frequently part owners of the boats, and they are therefore entitled to a separate share on that account. Their profits, therefore, on a successful trip, are very large, exceeding sometimes forty and even fifty dollars in one week. It not infrequently happens, however, that a company of fishermen engage or charter a vessel on speculation, and divide the proceeds equally among themselves, after deducting the amount paid for the hire to the owner. In some cases, however, the hands are engaged for regular wages. Working on shares is generally regarded as the best method that could be adopted, for it gives the men a direct interest in the success of the vessel, and renders them more expert in their work. In fact, it was the remarkable success of the American fishermen in the British waters, and their general superiority to the British, that gave rise to the late fishery difficulty with Great Britain. The fishermen of the colonies, who sailed for the coast of Europe, and who had a direct interest in their work, they were not so independent; they had not the same motive for exertion; and, as a matter of fact, the British fishermen were even in their own waters, and under the protection of their own flag, with our fishermen. They desired the intervention of their government in their behalf, for they knew well that they could not compete with the British on a level of success against such formidable competitors.

The New York fishery boats are remarkable for their strength, their neatness, and their peculiar adaptation to the occupation in which they are employed. They are all built of oak, and are generally of the length of the boat, and they are generally about three feet in length by two in width. At first sight it looks like a diminutive hatchway, but on a closer inspection it is found to be full of water, which is the result of the arrangement of the vessel. To the uninformed this may appear incredible, as it is generally thought that a vessel with holes must inevitably sink. Such is not the case, however, with the fishing boats, for the fish wells are connected with the outside of the vessel, and when the fish are caught they are immediately thrown into the well, and kept there until they are transferred to the fish cars. There are about two hundred fish cars in the dock at the foot of Fulton street, and each is connected to the fish stands. They are of different dimensions, and are each capable of containing about seven thousand pounds of fish. The average cost is about twenty dollars, and their total value may be estimated at about four thousand dollars. A great number of these fish cars are, however, during that time it may require frequent repairs. The kinds of fish kept in these are chiefly halibut, codfish, blackfish, and sea bass.

In addition to the "fish snags," there are a large number of small boats employed on the fishing grounds near Shrewsbury, and for a considerable space along the Jersey coast. These send large quantities to the commission dealers in Fulton market, by the steamboats plying between this city and the Jersey coast. The boats are generally of the length of the boat, and they are generally about three feet in length by two in width. At first sight it looks like a diminutive hatchway, but on a closer inspection it is found to be full of water, which is the result of the arrangement of the vessel. To the uninformed this may appear incredible, as it is generally thought that a vessel with holes must inevitably sink. Such is not the case, however, with the fishing boats, for the fish wells are connected with the outside of the vessel, and when the fish are caught they are immediately thrown into the well, and kept there until they are transferred to the fish cars. There are about two hundred fish cars in the dock at the foot of Fulton street, and each is connected to the fish stands. They are of different dimensions, and are each capable of containing about seven thousand pounds of fish. The average cost is about twenty dollars, and their total value may be estimated at about four thousand dollars. A great number of these fish cars are, however, during that time it may require frequent repairs. The kinds of fish kept in these are chiefly halibut, codfish, blackfish, and sea bass.

The business in the fish market commences about four o'clock, and is generally over at seven; but during these three hours nothing can exceed the confusion, if not the excitement, of the scene. The street immediately in front of the stands is crowded with wagons waiting to receive their supply, and the whole market is one scene of bustle and apparent confusion. Everything is conducted, however, in order, and each person has his own work to perform. A certain number of men are stationed on the cars with large nets, attached to long poles, with which they catch the fish, and give them alive to their customers. In this manner the whole of the fish is supplied with fish every morning by the dealers in this market. The fish dealers of Washington, Cataraugus, and all the other markets throughout the city, obtain their principal supply here. On Fridays the number of small boats employed on the fishing grounds near Shrewsbury, and for a considerable space along the Jersey coast, is estimated at one hundred and fifty, and the number of fishermen between three and four hundred. They generally commence operations about the latter part of May, and continue till some time in October, when the season terminates.

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stands will not realize sufficient to pay their hands, but their profits through the rest of the year supply remuneration for any loss sustained.

The number of stands engaged in the wholesale fish trade is twelve, and these are owned generally by companies of three persons, who have also shares in the fishing boats. The average daily receipts of each of these, the whole year round, may be safely estimated at three hundred dollars. This prevents the enormous sales of \$1,000,000, which are reported of some of the dealers. Of course, in this calculation, we leave out Sunday, as there is no business done on that day. Besides the wholesale dealers, there are ten who are engaged in the retail trade, and as the market is supplied by the former, their sales are included in the foregoing estimate. The wholesale dealers are allowed a commission of ten per cent on their sales, independent of what they are entitled to for their share in the vessel. The rules and regulations among these dealers are very strict, and indeed it is necessary that they should be so, to avoid the disorder which would inevitably happen. Each vessel, as it arrives, is allowed the privilege of discharging its freight first, no matter what time the market is open. The first twelve wholesale stands, several engage exclusively in the sale of codfish, halibut and blackfish, while others again deal chiefly in eels, porgies, flounders, &c.

SHAD. During the shad season, there is only one stand in the wholesale market that sells fish exclusively. The season begins about the middle of March, and lasts about seven weeks, during which time the shad markets are supplied by the shad boats, which are sold outside of the docks from the boats, and immense numbers of them are hawked around the city in wagons, and disposed of at a large profit by the retailers. In the commencement of the season, the shad is sold at a low price, but as the season advances, it is a great abundance in market they can be purchased for a shilling each. The commission on shad is one cent on each fish, and this is never varied, no matter what the price at which the shad is sold. The shad is sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

MACKEREL. These fish are caught off Sandy Hook, and are brought to market alive. They will not live longer than fifteen or twenty hours after they are caught, and when dead they do not "keep" so long as other fish. The manner in which mackerel fishing is pursued is singular and interesting. When the boat arrives near the fishing ground the hands commence throwing their nets, and when a sufficient amount in this way, they come to anchor and commence fishing. As the mackerel is a voracious fish, swarms of them are attracted about the vessel by the scattered bait, and are taken in great numbers. When taken they are immediately thrown into the fish wells.

The mackerel season begins in May, and continues throughout the whole of that month. The commission dealers in this fishery are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery. The mackerel is sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

CODFISH. The amount of codfish sold yearly in Fulton market, by the wholesale and retail dealers, exceeds that of any other fish, and forms about one-fourth of the total sales. All the commission dealers sell it, and there is not a retail stand in the market at which it cannot be purchased, except when there is an unusual scarcity. The great codfisheries are on the coast of New England, and the fish are brought to New York by the coastwise trade. The fish are sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

RASS. There are two varieties of this fish—the sea bass and the striped bass. The principal supply is obtained from the coast of New England, and is brought to New York by the coastwise trade. The fish are sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

SALMON. In our article on Washington market, we gave the leading particulars of the business in this fish, and it is therefore only necessary to state a few facts in relation to the trade in this market. Nearly all the dealers sell salmon, and the aggregate sales of this fish exceed those of any other fish. The fish are sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

HALIBUT. During the summer large quantities of this fish are taken on the St. George's banks, which lie about one hundred miles to the eastward of Boston. Halibut are caught in about forty different ways, and the most common is by means of a large net, which is towed by a small boat. The fish are sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

LOBSTERS. The extensive sales of this fish entitle it to particular notice. It is sold by nearly all the dealers in the market, and with the exception of the month of December, January, and February, there is always an abundant supply in the market during the whole year. In those months, however, there is a very limited quantity, and that is obtained from Boston, in which case the price is very high. The fish are sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

BLACKFISH. This fish is sold by all the dealers in the market; but the average daily sales of each do not exceed five hundred dollars. The fish are sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

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OYSTERS AND OTHER SHELL FISH. There are eight stands in Fulton market for the sale of oysters, clams, and other kinds of shell fish, which are sold annually. Of this amount, about one-third is expended for clams, scollops and mussels. The trade in oysters is chiefly retail, and not more than one-tenth are sold in the shell. Some shipments are made to Liverpool during the winter season, by the Collins and Adams steamers, but the quantity disposed of in this way is very limited, not exceeding eight barrels a month. There is only one company which exports oysters, and they sent more than twenty thousand dollars worth last year, to California. The oysters are sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

FRESH WATER FISH. But a very limited amount of fresh water fish is sold in Fulton market, in comparison with the other kinds. The principal varieties are perch, salmon and brook trout, pickered, suckers, and catfish. They are sold by nearly all the dealers during the year, and the trade in them is very unsteady, being more or less affected by the season. The fish are sold in the city, within a space extending from the lower part of Staten Island to Albany. A large proportion of what is caught is taken direct to Washington market, and disposed of there. The business in shad is conducted in a somewhat different manner from the trade in other fish. The commission, as we have stated, is not regulated by the value of the fish, but by the number sold; and the commission dealers, as a general thing, are engaged in the shad trade, and have a direct interest in the fishery.

THE FRUIT TRADE. There are three kinds of fruit dealers in this market—the dealers in foreign fruit, consisting of oranges, lemons, pine apples, bananas, &c., and wholesale and retail dealers in all the varieties of home fruit, such as apples, peaches, strawberries, pears, &c. The whole number of dealers is about thirty, of whom eight sell wholesale either for themselves or on commission, four sell foreign fruit, and the remainder are engaged in the sale of home fruit. Of these dealers, about eight are employed in the fruit business only during two or three months, and their number varies from year to year. It is with them a temporary business, and is abandoned at the end of the season, for poultry and vegetables, and particularly those who occupy stands in the country markets, sell nearly all kinds of fruit when in season. The aggregate sales of these dealers amount to about one hundred thousand dollars a year. In fact, the dealers in fruit are a very important class, and are engaged in the fruit business only during two or three months, and their number varies from year to year. It is with them a temporary business, and is abandoned at the end of the season, for poultry and vegetables, and particularly those who occupy stands in the country markets, sell nearly all kinds of fruit when in season. The aggregate sales of these dealers amount to about one hundred thousand dollars a year. In fact, the dealers in fruit are a very important class, and are engaged in the fruit business only during two or three months, and their number varies from year to year. It is with them a temporary business, and is abandoned at the end of the season, for poultry and vegetables, and particularly those who occupy stands in the country markets, sell nearly all kinds of fruit when in season. The aggregate sales of these dealers amount to about one hundred thousand dollars a year. 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